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WILDLIFE SERVICES—KANSAS

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USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Kansas

Every day, residents, industries, organizations and agencies call on Kansas Wildlife Services (WS) for help in protecting agriculture, human health and safety, natural resources, and property from damage or threats posed by wildlife. Managed by professional wildlife biologists, WS responds to these requests with effective, selective, and humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts.

WS works to protect property and reduce human health and safety risks at airports, schools, and along roadways. The program also protects people, pets, and livestock from wildlife-borne diseases; guards many natural resources, such as fisheries and timber, from wildlife depredation; and educates the public about wildlife and wildlife damage management. Specific projects conducted by Kansas WS include, protecting human health and safety at airports, protecting property and utilities, managing blackbird and starling damage at livestock facilities and assisting the military in mitigating a variety of wildlife problems caused by skunks, coyotes, beavers, pigeons, starlings, and other wildlife.

Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

Kansas WS offers information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable many people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, this *technical assistance* can be provided over the phone. In some cases,

Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Protecting livestock facilities from starling and blackbird damage
- Protecting property and public utilities from pigeons, starlings and blackbird damage
- Managing damage at airports from wildlife strikes
- Managing damage caused by wildlife and protecting property from damage on military lands
- Providing technical assistance to Kansas residents about a variety of wildlife conflicts

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Kansas:

- Evaluating effective management of blackbirds at livestock facilities, grain sorghum and sunflower producers
- Identifying starlings and blackbirds as disease reservoirs and vectors at livestock facilities
- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Managing bird damage to public utilities
- Monitoring wildlife diseases such as rabies in skunks and bats and monitoring disease in feral hogs



WS will also provide on-site expertise, or *direct assistance*, to manage complex wildlife problems that cannot be safely resolved by others. To support this effort, WS conducts *scientific research* across the Nation to develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure the program benefits from the latest science and technology.

Protecting Agricultural Resources—Kansas is probably best known as a wheat producing state but also produces a wide variety of agricultural products. Kansas produces a variety of grains to include grain sorghum, corn, soy beans, sunflower and of course wheat. Live-stock production is predominantly beef cattle, but Kansas is also home to a number of dairies, hog farms and a variety of hobby farms. With such diverse amount agricultural resources, WS is constantly facing challenging and new wildlife conflicts.

Aquaculture Assistance—Kansas WS biologist assists aquaculture in Kansas by providing technical assistance dealing with migratory bird damage. Technical assistance often involves species identification, suggestions for control strategies as well as equipment loan.

The Wildlife Services program provides assistance to State and private aquaculture facilities in obtaining depredation permits from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services when such permits are warranted. Protecting Agricultural Crops Migratory blackbirds cause significant losses to agricultural crops such as grain sorghum and sunflower. A recent survey from the National Sunflower Association identifies over \$1 million dollars are lost each year to blackbird damage in Kansas sunflower. WS responds to these complaints with technical assistance, operational control or equipment loan.

Protecting Livestock—Blackbirds, such as red-winged blackbirds, brown-headed cowbirds, Brewer's blackbirds, common grackles, great-tailed grackles, and European starlings, cause significant economic losses to some livestock producers by consuming and contaminating livestock feed, acting as a vector for livestock diseases, and requiring pest management. Flocks of hundreds of thousands or more of these birds feed at Kansas feedlots each day from mid-November through mid-March. The managers of these facilities have estimated that blackbirds and starling can consume and contaminate thousands of dollars worth of livestock feed at each facility daily. During one recent winter, WS researchers estimated that blackbirds caused more than \$660,000 in damage to three Kansas feedlots.

WS recommends and uses a wide array of techniques to mitigate the problems associated with large flocks of blackbirds. Producers are encouraged to use noise-making devices to try and scare the birds out of their facilities, schedule livestock feedings at times when fewer birds are present, and modify feed bunks and other equipment to minimize the availability of livestock feed to birds. WS also uses selective and environmentally safe methods to reduce local bird populations to levels that are tolerable. In addition, NWRC is working hard to develop more effective and efficient blackbird and starling management methods that will alleviate damage while remaining biologically sound and publicly acceptable. The Department of Biological Sciences, North Dakota State University, Fargo, in cooperation with the USDA Wildlife Services, National Wildlife Research Center and Kansas Wildlife Services program, has a graduate research assistantship available to study European Starling movements among feedlots in the Great Bend, Kansas area starting in late 2005.

Protecting Health and Safety—Kansas is a diverse ecological mix of urban and suburban settings and agricultural, forested, and grassland environments that are also home to almost 2.7 million people. Accordingly, WS biologists work to reduce public health and safety risks and property damage associated with wildlife damage.

Protecting Human Health and Safety at Airports—Every year, lives are endangered worldwide and billions of dollars are wasted when birds and other animals damage aircraft. Experts estimate that wildlife strikes with airplanes cost the U.S. civil aviation industry more than \$500 million annually. Kansas has one of the country's busiest air-transportation centers. Wichita, KS is known as the Air Capitol of the Midwest because it is home to McConnell Air Force Base, Wichita Mid-Continent Airport, Colonel James Jabara Airport, several private aircraft manufacturers (Raytheon, Boeing, Cessna, and Lear-Jet), and numerous private airports.

WS is recognized internationally for its scientific expertise in reducing wildlife hazards to the aviation industry. WS National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC), conducts research from its Sandusky, OH field station to reduce wildlife hazards to aviation and reduce risks to the public. Studies are underway at several large airports where scientists evaluate habitat management practices and wildlife dispersal techniques. NWRC also maintains the National Wildlife Strike Database used by the

Major Cooperators:

- Individual feedlots and dairies
- U.S. Army - Conservation Division, Fort Riley Military Reservation
- Wichita Mid-Continent and Colonel James Jabara Airports
- Kansas City Power and Light
- Kansas City Board of Public Utilities

Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and airports to monitor trends and wildlife species of greatest concern to the aviation industry.

Applying this scientific expertise, the Kansas WS program provides assistance to several civilian and military airports annually. WS officials conduct on-site evaluations and comprehensive wildlife hazard assessments before direct management work is done.

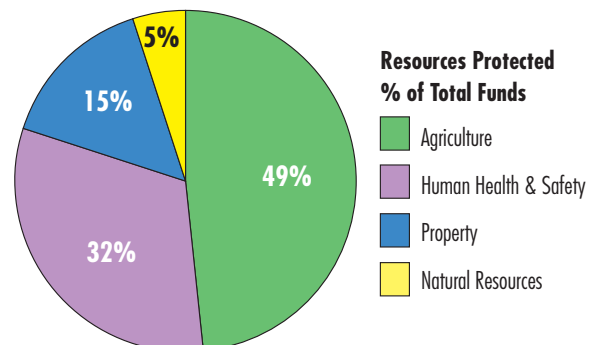
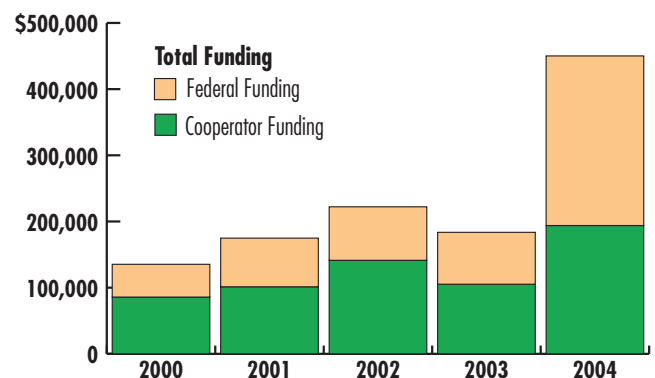
Looking to the Future

WS continues to address blackbird and starling damage at livestock feedlots, dairies, and in sunflower and grain sorghum fields throughout the State. Our recent addition of personnel will help to address the enormity of the problem. WS' ability to address these needs in a timely and professional manner is also contingent upon cooperation from other State and Federal agencies, appropriate habitat management practices, and research.

In addition, a number of wildlife-borne diseases have recently become a growing concern in Kansas. Rabies cases in Kansas were again well above average in 2004 with the disease being found in skunks, bats and a variety of domestic animals. In 2002, chronic wasting disease (CWD) was found for the first time in a captive herd of elk in Kansas. Testing of wild animals has increased again this year to determine if CWD is present in wild populations. Expanding populations of feral hogs and the disease impact they can have on domestic producers is becoming a large concern in Kansas.

Kansas Wildlife Services Funding

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators; such as producers; private individuals; businesses; and other Federal, State, and Local government agencies who have a vested interest in the program. In most cases, these cooperators need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or play a role in wildlife damage management.



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